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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000701

SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR KRISTEN HECHT, BRIAN GRANT, AND AMANDA EDWARDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2028

TAGS: PREL PTER KTFN SY PINS

SUBJECT: APHSCT WAINSTEIN MEETS WITH KUWAITI PRIME MINISTER
AND FOREIGN MINISTER ON TERRORISM, URGING INCREASED
COOPERATION

REF: A. KUWAIT 808
1B. KUWAIT 508

Classified By: Ambassador Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (S) Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHSCT) Kenneth Wainstein accompanied by AMB Jones met on June 11 with Kuwaiti Prime Minister (PM) Shaykh Nasser Al Sabah and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah. APHSCT Wainstein shared a letter from President Bush praising the Government of Kuwait's (GOK) important role in the global war on terrorism, inviting the Prime Minister to Washington and stressing the need for increased cooperation to combat terrorism and terrorist financing. On the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), APHSCT Wainstein spoke of the imminent U.S. designation and offered to send an informed USG official to discuss the details of the case with an appropriate GOK interlocutor. The PM praised the GOK's close cooperation with the USG on counterterrorism and encouraged closer coordination. In contrast to the PM, Dr. Mohammed pushed back on both RIHS and Guantanamo (GTMO), citing "lack of evidence" for illegal RIHS activities. He argued that both the designation and continued detentions at GTMO would be major factors fueling, rather than combating, extremism. End Summary.

Increased Cooperation Needed

¶2. (S) APHSCT Wainstein and delegation accompanied by AMB Jones and notetaker met on June 11 with Kuwaiti PM Shaykh Nasser Al Mohammed Al Ahmed Al Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah. APHSCT Wainstein shared a letter from the President thanking the GOK for its important role in the global war on terrorism, inviting the Prime Minister to Washington for further discussions and encouraging increased cooperation to disrupt terrorism, terrorist financing, and facilitation in Kuwait. He requested additional exchanges of information through more formalized and regular meetings between the USG and GOK to help "connect the dots" on terrorism cases. The PM responded that in his opinion, cooperation was excellent. He added that the GOK has a firmer grasp on terrorism than in the past and that the situation is now "controllable."

Stopping Extremist Ideology, RIHS, and GTMO

¶3. (S) APHSCT Wainstein spoke about the Saudi rehabilitation program and asked what the Kuwaitis were doing to combat extremist ideology and rehabilitate terrorists. He acknowledged that the world can't "arrest its way out of the problem of terrorism" and needs to work better to win hearts and minds. The PM said that it is extremely difficult to change the beliefs of people who are brainwashed, but that Kuwait is better off now than it was 8-10 years ago, partly due to good cooperation with the USG. He urged continued support, but stressed the need to share facts, not "talk." (Note: He is likely referring to the GOK's concerns with USG information shared on charities, including RIHS, and terrorist financiers. The GOK frequently reiterates its need for more robust information. End note.).

Dr. Mohammed expanded on the PM's comments, adding that he sees three main reasons as to why people turn to extremism: the continued detention of people at GTMO; the poor and destitute conditions in many countries which he labeled "Al-Qaeda's most effective recruitment tool;" and actions to close Arab and Islamic charities, like RIHS. He urged the closure of GTMO and the speedy return of the four remaining Kuwaiti detainees. Dr. Mohammed argued strenuously that the designation of RIHS would be counterproductive as the costs in terms of reducing the poverty that provides a candidate pool for Al-Qaeda recruitment, would outweigh the benefits of catching those "relatively few" diverted funds. He stressed the importance of expanding legitimate charitable giving to counter extremism.

¶4. (S) APHSCT Wainstein acknowledged Dr. Mohammed's concerns, but stated that the USG would proceed with the designation of RIHS. He stressed the long history of RIHS

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and the USG's efforts to share information with the GOK on numerous occasions in the past (Ref A). To address the GOK's concerns, APHSCT Wainstein offered to send a USG official to walk through the RIHS information with an appropriate GOK interlocutor. However, he acknowledged that the two governments may simply have to agree to disagree. On GTMO, APHSCT Wainstein expressed the President's desire to close the detention facility. He said that some cases would be brought to a military court and other prisoners may be repatriated. However, he noted the continued USG concern with the GOK's apparent lack of ability and will to monitor former GTMO detainees, citing Ajmi's suicide attack in Mosul and his reported recruitment of two other Kuwaitis to join him in the attacks (Ref B). Dr. Mohammed suggested it was Ajmi's GTMO detention that caused him to return to Kuwait radicalized. APHSCT Wainstein rejected that assertion and made clear that the USG could not agree to the repatriation of the final GTMO detainees without adequate assurances of incarceration or active and effective monitoring.

Terrorist Financing

¶5. (S) APHSCT Wainstein inquired into the status of the draft terrorist financing law and stressed the importance of robust terrorism and terrorism financing legislation to confront extremism. Shaykh Nasser said that the law remains in draft, but that financing is "very controllable." He said that the Central Bank of Kuwait plays a strong role in combating and disrupting terrorism financing and "watches every penny." You can be assured, he said, that money is not going to terrorists. However, he noted that the problem was monitoring cash, specifically cash couriers. (Note: Kuwait does not have an outbound cash declaration or disclosure requirement. GOK officials suggest that this will be included in any amended terrorist financing law. End note.).

APHSCT Wainstein commended the GOK on hosting conferences and workshops on anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing and offered USG assistance to develop Kuwait's financial investigative capabilities.

¶ 16. (S) The PM turned the conversation to Pakistan's role in supporting violence and terrorism in Afghanistan. He inquired into American, Afghan, and Pakistani efforts to stop the flow of funds into Afghanistan. In Peshawar, he said, even receiving USD 10 can go a long way towards a terrorist attack. APHSCT Wainstein acknowledged that attacks can be cheap and stressed that the USG is looking at funding to dry up sources, but also better understand terrorist networks.

He added that cash couriers remain a significant funding source for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. USG efforts to address the movement of cash have included working on source countries and donors, targeting flights and passengers traveling to Pakistan and also working to regulate hawalas. APHSCT Wainstein said that Pakistan was another case where the GOK and USG needed to work together to disrupt funding and facilitation networks.

East Africa, Yemen, and Iran

¶ 17. (S) The PM expressed concern about the recent conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti and asked whether the USG had any information on Al-Qaeda networks in either country. NSC Senior Director Rasmussen responded that this is an area of concern to the USG, especially Eritrea, and that the USG is monitoring the flow of money and weapons from East Africa. On Yemen, the PM expressed his concern about the lack of government control in Yemen, particularly in the north, and the increased instability in the country. APHSCT Wainstein mentioned that he will be traveling to Yemen after Kuwait. Yemen, he said, remains a country of significant concern due to the ungoverned area in the north and the potential for this region to be used as a staging ground, by Al-Qaeda or others, for attacks in Yemen or in the region. He added the USG's concern about high profile targets, including former GTMO detainees, who escaped from Yemeni prison. On Iran, the PM expressed his concern with Iran's nuclear intentions, but stressed his desire to "sit, sit, sit and talk, talk, talk" rather than engage in any military action. APHSCT Wainstein expressed the President's concerns about a nuclear Iran and stressed the USG's desire to resolve the conflict

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peacefully.

¶ 18. (S) Comment: The PM did not initially raise GTMO and RIHS. He left the discussion to Dr. Mohammed, who took a more assertive tone on these issues. The PM supported Dr. Mohammed's comments, but continued to play the role of good cop, praising the strong USG-GOK relationship and raising mutual areas of concern: cash couriers and support for terrorism in Afghanistan. End comment.

¶ 19. (S) The participants of the meetings, which took place at Kuwait National Assembly, included:

U.S.

Ambassador Deborah K. Jones
Kenneth Wainstein, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
Nicholas Rasmussen, Senior Director for Combating Terrorism, NSC
John Duncan, Director for Combating Terrorism, NSC
Kate Gladney, Aide to Mr. Wainstein
Danny Harris (notetaker)

GOK

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al Mohammed Al Ahmed Al Sabah
Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah
Deputy Chief of the National Security Bureau Shaykh Thamer Ali Al Sabah
Assistant Undersecretary at the Premier's Office Shaykh

Fahad Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah

¶10. (U) This cable has been cleared by APHSCT Wainstein.

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